

English For Life

Pre-intermediate

TOM HUTCHINSON

Teacher's Book

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English For Life, Pre-intermediate is a new coursebook which is part of a four-level general English course from real beginner to intermediate level. The stated target users are adult and young adult learners. The Student's Book is accompanied by an interactive CD-Rom. There is also a Teachers's Book, Class Audio CDs and Workbook.

The Student's Book

The Student's Book is divided into 20 units, or cycles, each covering a common central topic such as Travel and Transport and Shopping. Each topic consists of a group of four lessons: Vocabulary, Grammar, Skills and English for Everyday Life, giving a total of 80 colourfully presented one-page lessons. These single-page lessons are intended to last 45-minutes and have a clear focus so learners can proceed at a manageable pace, learning one thing at a time.

Vocabulary is introduced around the topic in picture dictionary style on the page, as well as on the audio for pronunciation work. The vocabulary session is intended to be the first lesson in each cycle with learners meeting the new lexis repeatedly during the remaining three lessons in the unit. The labelled picture format is appropriate, particularly at lower levels, as it allows learners to go back and easily review new items where necessary.

Grammar is clearly presented in short texts or dialogues on the page focusing on one aspect of structure, with a more detailed grammar reference section at the back of the Student's Book. The particular form is then highlighted and used in the Skills and English for Everyday Life lessons later in the cycle.

The skills lessons are well designed to review the vocabulary and grammar from the previous two lessons in the context of a suitably graded reading or listening text, between 250 and 350 words long. Each cycle focuses on two macro skills highlighted

in the lesson heading: Listen and speak, Read and speak or Listen and write.

English for Everyday Life lessons focus on functional language and introduce numerous everyday expressions. These lessons alternate between a functional lesson point, such as Booking a hotel room, and an episode of *That's Life!*, a ten-part soap opera story aptly designed to engage learners with the characters that appear throughout. The story ends with a delicate cliffhanger in the epilogue, encouraging learners to speculate on the outcome, which is then provided on the audio for them to confirm their predictions.

The various lessons regularly include sub-sections such as Your Life exercises where learners personalise the vocabulary, grammar or skills previously highlighted. When used appropriately, this should facilitate the progress of activities and lesson stages from controlled practice to more authentic use. Additionally, frequent English in the world boxes feature aspects of life and society in English-speaking countries. This supports cultural awareness among learners as they are required to think and talk about their own culture and language in comparison. Regular Pronunciation boxes address aspects of English pronunciation and prosody that commonly prove difficult for NESB learners. Examples of these difficulties include minimal pairs, consonant clusters, third person 's', syllable and sentence stress, and intonation. All of these sub-sections appear in the most relevant lesson and present the supplementary teaching points very briefly. They should, however, provide ample opportunity for a competent teacher to extend lessons where appropriate in response to learner weaknesses or course requirements.

All eighty lessons have a clear learning outcome, taken from the Common European Framework, which is presented at the bottom of the page in a, Now I can..., box. This is a welcome feature showing learners the real-world relevance of each lesson point and allowing them to continually monitor their progress.

The Student's Book also contains a review section and wordlist at the back for every 2 cycles (every 8 lessons). Wordlists incorporate all the essential vocabulary encountered in that section with phonemic transcriptions. A phonemic chart and irregular verb list is also included. The audio scripts are at the back of the Student's Book facilitating learner revision and the use of scripts in post-listening tasks without the need for further photocopying.

The Teacher's Book

Invaluable teacher support in lesson preparation, a detailed lesson plan is provided opposite each lesson on the facing page in the Teacher's Book. These notes incorporate further warm-up and follow-up ideas to extend lessons. Areas of potential problems for learners are properly highlighted, which should encourage teachers to incorporate strategies to address these difficulties into their teaching styles. The introduction to the

Teacher's Book contains an extensive range of support for less experienced teachers, with detailed notes on the course syllabus and numerous additional ideas for classroom activities, including methodology for the various lesson types, vocabulary games and activities, and guidelines for the preparation and use of flashcards. There is also one page of additional photocopiable communicative activities for each lesson, with accompanying teacher's notes outlining how they are to be used in class.

Additional Resources

Each lesson in the Student's Book corresponds to a page of practice material in the Workbook. There is a short review exercise every four lessons to assess progress. The interactive MultiROM contains extra practice exercises for students to review each unit, plus some additional pronunciation practice. Also, the 'can-do' statements from the Student's Book are listed and there is a learning record where learners can document their progress.

A CD of tests contains 20 progress tests, a mid-course test and an end-of-course test. While the inclusion of tests among supplementary materials is not uncommon for current publications, these tests are particularly useful as they are in both pdf and Word document format so they may be edited and customised to suit the particular class or situation in question. Hence, there is no need for teachers to develop their own tests from scratch when those provided are unsuitable.

English for Life has a website for teachers, where all the usual expected resources can be found. Included are wordlists, tests, assessment records for students and links to OUP online resources. A website for students has resources such as revision tests, additional activities based on the *That's Life* story and interactive language games.

Overall, *English for Life, Pre-intermediate* is an extensive resource which would be well suited as the core textbook for a general English programme. However, the important issue is what, if anything, sets it apart from currently popular publications. The *That's Life* story, *English for Everyday Life* lessons, *English in the world* and *Your Life* boxes are welcome innovative features. While the one-lesson per page format, each with a separate outcome, makes it easy to plan and document course progress, particularly for experienced teachers, those less knowledgeable or ill-prepared may move through single-page lessons hastily without the awareness or capability of utilising opportunities to extend and incorporate supplementary activities. In such cases, it is necessary that the Teacher's Book and Workbook are always at hand. If not used as a core classroom text, the *English for Life, Pre-intermediate* package would certainly prove an invaluable addition to the supplementary resource shelf of any teachers' room.

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